DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 292 060 CS 009 063

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TITLE	Coherence or Chaos? Qualitative Dimensions of the Literacy Instruction Provided Low-Achievement Children.
SPONS AGENCY	Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jan 88
GRANT	G008630480
NOTE	88p.; Page six is marginally legible.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; *Educational Policy; Elementary Education; Federal Programs; Grade 2; Grade 4; Learning Disabilities; Literacy; Literacy Education; Mainstreaming; Reading Instruction; *Remedial Instruction; Remedial Programs; School Policy; *Special Education; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	District School Relationship; Education Consolidation Improvement Act Chapter 1

ABSTRACT

Examining efforts to provide both remedial and special education programs through Chapter 1 of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1980 (ECIA), a study considered two broad areas which influence the quality of remedial instruction offered in schools: (1) aspects of district-level organizational policies and how they influence opportunities for literacy instruction; and (2) the nature of the literacy instruction that Chapter 1 and mainstreamed mildly handicapped students experience across the school day. The whole school day experiences of 52 second and fourth grade children (26 at each grade level) from four school districts were analyzed. The school districts varied in size and community type, and students were drawn from an array of regular education classes and were provided instructional support services by 20 different specialist teachers (10 Chapter 1 and 10 special education teachers). In order to clarify district and school policies and instructional experiences, interviews were conducted with district and school building administrators, as well as specialist and classroom teachers. Student observational records focused on field notes, curricula materials in use and photocopies of completed student work, and instructional experiences were studied using the Student Observation Instrument (SOI). Findings were analyzed according to district and grade level, and showed that in general, the observed instructional experiences did not fulfill the expectation that remedial and mildly handicapped students had access to larger amounts of superior instruction. Many students experienced undifferentiated instruction in both classroom and resource room and a fragmentation of curricular experiences. (Forty-five references are appended.) (MM)

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Coherence or chaos ? Qualitative dimensions of the literacy instruction provided low-achievement children.

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January 15, 1988

This study was supported with funds from the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (Grant # G008630480). The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the sponsoring agency, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

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Remedial and special education programs have undergone substantial transformations in the past 25 years. Both categories of instructional support programs have expanded and evolved over this period as a result of various governmental and societal initiatives. As a result, virtually all American public schools now provide both remedial and special education services. In large part these efforts derive from 1) Chapter I of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1980 (ECIA) and earlier related federal compensatory education enactments (see footnote) and 2) Public Law 94-142, the Education of Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (EHA). These two federal initiatives provide substantial fiscal and legal incentives for school districts to offer extra-instructional services for children who experience difficulties in regular education programs. While these two initiatives are "based on different assumptions about the etiology of the child's failure...and derive their legal and fiscal statuses from different judicial and legislative decisions." (McGill-Franzen,1987),

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Footnote: Chapter I of ECIA is a direct descendant of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Though the ECIA altered some provisions of the earlier act, in most respects Chapter I programs are similar to the earlier Title I programs. Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1982) provide a fairly comprehensive analysis of the development of remedial and special education programs under these federal initiatives.

they share the common feature of serving, primarily, children who have not been successful in regular education classrooms through specialist teachers who remove children from the regular education classroom for some part of the school day.

Instructional efforts offered through both programs are designed to resolve or alleviate the learning difficulties experienced by participating children. It seems clear that Chapter I programs are understood as efforts to remediate basic skills (e.g. reading,writing and mathematics) failure through supplementary instructional efforts. It is less clear that special education programs, even for the mildly handicapped, are understood this way. However, recent incentives to foster declassification activities suggest that some educators see resolving academic failure as an appropriate goal for special education programs. But, as Coles (1987) has suggested, others may understand the identification of students as handicapped to indicate the presence of a physiological deficit that is likely to impair learning capacity permanently. A result of the evolutionary process, McGill-Franzen (1987) argues, is that our understandings of school failure, and reading failure in particular, have changed over time. As our understandings have changed, so too has the nature of special education services and populations changed.

Currently, most children identified as handicapped and entitled to special education services fall under the broad classification of mildly handicapped, with children identified as learning disabled (LD) representing the largest category of participants. As McGill-Franzen (1987) has noted, this group of children is not only the largest but the most rapidly expanding special education population. She notes that the increase in children identified as LD neatly matches the decline in Chapter I participants over the past decade. That is, the 1.5 million student decrease in Chapter I may be reflected in the 1.8 million student increase in LD identification. In any event, it is increasingly clear that remedial programs and special education programs for the mildly handicapped serve students who are similar in many ways, and strikingly similar in their academic diagnostic profiles (Algozzine and Ysseldyke,1983; Bartoli and Botel,1988; Bogdan,1982; Jenkins,1987; Mehan,1984; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Shinn and McGue,1982).

Nonetheless, most schools offer instructional support services for children through both Chapter I and special education, with little overlap in planning, personnel, or participating children. In this analysis we have attempted to characterize how school districts respond to both federal initiatives. Basically, we sought to describe the opportunities for literacy

instruction available to students who were participants in these programs. Put another way, we attempted to ascertain the extent to which participants in either program had access to larger amounts of higher quality literacy instruction. In an earlier quantitative analysis we noted that Chapter I participants did, in fact, receive larger quantities of literacy instruction than did mainstreamed mildly handicapped students (Allington and McGill-Franzen,1987). However, what remains to be more adequately addressed is the quality of instruction experienced and potential sources for the differences we found.

Our earlier findings were similar, in some respects, to those of Haynes and Jenkins (1986) and Ysseldyke, Thurlow, Mecklenburg, and Graden (1984) who noted that mainstreamed mildly handicapped students participation in special education programs did not increase the quantity of literacy instruction available to participants compared to the amount offered non-handicapped children. Likewise, the enormous variability in quantity of literacy instruction received by special education students was also reported by Haynes and Jenkins, as well as Zigmond, Vallecorsa and Leinhardt (1980), Thurlow, Graden, Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1984) and Ysseldyke, et al (1984). What seems clear then is that participation in special education programs, even when students are mainstreamed mildly

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handicapped learners, does not ensure access to larger amounts of literacy instruction.

In the analyses that follow we considered two broad areas which influence the quality of instruction offered in schools. At one level we considered aspects of district-level organizational policies, since Dreeben and Barr (1983) have illustrated how administrative decisions about various resources (including instructional time allocation, curriculum/textbook selection, grouping and placement decisions) constrain the actions of teachers in schools. Dreeben (1987) argues that learning deficits can "be attributed in part to the actions of district and school administrators before classroom instruction ever takes place."(p.32). By contrasting the instructional experiences of children in different districts with different district-level policies concerning Chapter I and special education for the mildly handicapped we attempt to identify how such policies influence the opportunities for literacy instruction.

At a second level we examine the nature of the literacy instruction that Chapter I and mainstreamed mildly handicapped students experience across the school day. In this analysis we have been particularly concerned with the issues of the quality of instruction experienced. Our

analyses here were guided by the assumption that the quality of instruction is at least as critical as the quantity. That is, one could argue that even smaller amounts of higher quality instruction would serve the needs of children experiencing learning difficulties better than large amounts of ineffective instruction. In our analyses of instructional quality we focused on several particular features of instruction that have been identified as characteristic of effective programs for the populations studied. We looked for evidence of coordination with regular education programs, and for curricular coordination in particular (Allington and Johnston, 1986; Griswold, Cotton and Hansen,1986; The National RRC Panel on Effectiveness in Special Education,1986; Sarason,1983). Since failure in the core curriculum was the primary determinant in identification of those who received services under either program we examined the instructional experiences of the participants to determine the linkages between literacy instruction in the instructional support programs and that in the core curriculum of the regular education classroom. In addition, we examined literacy instruction to determine the nature of the instructional activities that participants were assigned. We were particularly interested in the types of academic tasks which these students experienced. Thus, we noted task features such as the unit of text that was the focus of the instructional activity, the difficulty of the

material and the skill or topic that was being addressed. Our goal then was to not only describe the literacy instruction that Chapter I and mainstreamed mildly handicapped students experienced but also to attempt to explain why we saw that which we saw.

Methodology

We analyzed the whole school day experiences of 52 second and fourth grade children (26 at each grade level) from four school districts. The school districts varied in size and community type, including a rural, suburban and two small city school districts. These students were drawn from an array of regular education classrooms and were provided instructional support services by twenty different specialists teachers (10 Chapter I and 10 special education).

For our analyses we had several types of information available. In each district we had interviews with both district and school building administrators and with specialist and classroom teachers. Many of these interviews were available in a transcribed format, in other cases an analytic summary and the original audiotape recording were available. The set of interviews was generally complete, though a few teachers did not consent to participate. We used the interview evidence to clarify district and school policies, as understood by the participating teachers and administrators and to clarify the observed instructional experiences. The interviews often also provided both an historical glimpse of the evolution of current policies and practices and personal comments about the issues

we were most interested in.

We had a single whole school day observational record for each participating student. This record was comprised of several sorts of evidence. The primary data for analysis of student instructional experiences were drawn from the Student Observation Instrument (SOI). The SOI offered a combined system of structured coding categories with descriptive field notes which provided a chronological record of student experiences across the various instructional settings (the Allington and McGill-Franzen [1987] report details an analysis of the quantitative data from the structured coding categories). For these analyses the focused field notes were the primary source of data. In addition, the observational record included a listing of the curricular materials in use and photocopies of these materials whenever possible (including copies of completed student work).

Based upon the interview and observational records we prepared a summary of each district's organizational plan for the delivery of Chapter I and special education services. These summaries offered us a framework for analyzing both the 'fit' of the services provided with organizational plan and a template for evaluating the influences of such district and building plans on the participating childrens' instructional experiences.

The fieldnotes available in the SOI were analyzed and each literacy instructional activity was identified. We began our analyses by noting whether the observational record indicated engagement in the activity by the observed student. We excluded those activities in which students were observed to be unengaged in the literacy learning event, primarily because the available evidence suggests that engagement is in the instructional activity is central to enhanced achievement. That is, a scheduled opportunity for independent reading is one thing but engagement in independent reading is another. We note this because the SOI system of structured coding categories included no differentiation in these instances, evidence of engagement, or the lack of it, was reported in the field notes only.

The fieldnote information concerning student engagement did not typically reflect the "flickers of inattention" common to all learners, but instead indicated those extended off-task periods that were common to some of the observed subjects. Also excluded from these analyses were instructional activities that occurred during scheduled literacy instructional times but which were determined to have no particular relationship to literacy development. For instance, though the structured coding indicated a Chapter I reading session, the students were involved

simply in coloring and cutting out Valentine shapes for the period. No words, phrases or text were the focus of attention and thus we omitted this activity from our analyses. On the other hand, during a special education session one child was observed producing a picture to illustrate a story he was writing. This activity was included because the picture creation was related to the text and the activity seemed an appropriate "scaffolding" activity in the composition process.

After the episodes of engaged literacy instructional activities had been identified and coded as to whether the activity occurred in the regular education or the support instruction setting, each was analyzed further. We began by focusing on the academic work that children were engaged in, noting the size of the unit of text that was the focus of the response required by the task. We coded these as focused on word, sentence or story levels based upon the unit of text presented the child. Then we noted whether the evaluation of the response was centered on simple accuracy or on comprehension. For instance, words, or sentences, or stories can be simply pronounced, or read with little attention to the meaning of the text. On the other hand, one can focus on the meaning of text at each of these levels. We inspected both the field notes and samples of the curricular materials to determine this focus. Next we attempted to

determine the difficulty of the task as represented by two indices;1) publisher's designation, and 2) student error rate. Finally, the skill, strategy, and/or topic of the task were derived from the fieldnotes and copies of the tasks that were available.

These analyses, then, formed the basic data reduction process. Based on the results we attempted to characterize the nature of the literacy instruction that these children experienced across the school day. The analyses produced information that allowed us to compare the literacy instruction individuals received in various settings across the day and to compare the literacy instruction in regular education classrooms, Chapter I classrooms and special education resource rooms. From these comparisons we draw our conclusions concerning the nature of literacy instruction in various settings and the coordination of instruction across these settings.

By aggregating these data across school districts we were able to address patterns of response in the instruction offered children who participated in either Chapter I or special education programs for the mildly handicapped. By examining the patterns of response to individuals against the backdrop of the district organizational plan reported in the interviews,

we derived some inferences about how school district administrators and district organizational plans influence the access that participating children have to larger amounts of higher quality literacy instruction.

We report the results of these various analyses by first describing the literacy instructional experiences of the participating children in each school district. In these summaries we attempt to characterize the nature of the literacy instruction offered in the regular education classroom, the Chapter I classroom and the special education program and determine not only the relative contribution of each, but also the level of coordination observed between the various settings. Within each summary we also present our analyses of district organizational plan influences on the literacy instruction we observed.

We continue with a discussion of the results which emphasizes; 1) a general characterization of the adequacy of the responses of schools to the instructional needs of the children observed, 2) the constraints that organizational policies and plans exert on the design of instructional intervention efforts, and 3) the influence of teacher routines on the instruction offered individual children. We conclude with two recommendations for reorganizing our efforts to better serve children who

fail to learn on schedule.

Findings

District 1.

In this suburban district a single district administrator is responsible for all instructional support programs and a unique blending of federal, state and local monies results in what we called a multifund system for delivery of instructional support services. This district contributes local funds in excess of the amounts available from state and federal sources for the maintenance of instructional support services, basically doubling the funds available. The primary criteria into this multifund system is teacher referral, with virtually any child recommended eligible for service. The multifund system, then, is more focused on service delivery than categorical eligibility, though both Chapter I and special education regulations are attended to at the district level. However, at the building level no one could reliably identify the categorical eligibility of individual children served.

Literacy support instruction is delivered primarily by certified reading specialists, both for Chapter I and special education students, though students from both programs may work with an instructional aide for

either literacy or math support. In a similar manner support instruction in mathematics is most often delivered by a special education teacher, regardless of the categorical identification with Chapter I or special education. Since the various specialist teachers are funded through various sources, instruction is offered by the teacher considered best prepared to deal with a child's difficulty. Fewer than 10% of the students meet federal income eligibility for Chapter I and less than 5% have been identified as handicapped.

Grade 4. The multifund program was designed as a supplement to the classroom program and this was typically true at the fourth grade level. Here all students were homogeneously regrouped for classroom reading instruction following the general pattern of the Joplin Plan. That is all grade 4 classes offered reading instruction during the same time period each day and all students attended these session with peers of roughly comparable achievement levels, though in many cases this meant that the students left their homeroom classes to receive reading instruction in another room. These students received multifund reading instructional support in addition to this core curriculum instruction- both Chapter I and mainstreamed handicapped children.

Classroom literacy instruction in the grade 4 classrooms was consistent with what might be termed a 'response centered ' approach to literacy. In these classes commercially developed basal reader materials at the high third and fourth grade levels were used along with a literature basal at the fourth grade level. Whereas in most cases the reading material came from commercially prepared reading curricula, in at least one case a participating student [54] was a member of an instructional group that was using a children's tradebook as the instructional material. This instance is consistent with the instructional plan reported by a district level administrator who noted that the district reading/language arts curriculum included a tradebook reading component. Silent reading of stories, and direct instruction in word and story level comprehension were the primary instructional activities of the classroom lessons and together constituted 45% of the students' engaged time.

Tradebooks were read by classroom teachers in listening activities that were a part (10%) of almost every observed school day. In addition, time was also allocated for writing activities during most classroom observations. Students spent time actually composing and revising stories, the primary focus of the writing instruction at this level. Less than a quarter of the classroom time was devoted to word level activities

with a focus on accuracy. The majority of this instruction on word accuracy derived from the use of a spelling workbook for whole class spelling assignments, activities not consistent with the orientation of the rest of the literacy instruction.

Thus, the Chapter I and mainstreamed mildly handicapped students were involved in a substantial number of classroom literacy instructional activities in the regular classroom. In the main, these students experienced opportunities to engage in comprehension focused story reading and writing activities along with their peers. However, no differentiation of instruction was observed, with all students assigned identical grade level activities.

The literacy support instruction offered Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students in the multifund program also reflected an on story comprehension. With these grade 4 students, silent reading of trade books or longer basal basal stories, for example, was observed in a majority of the multifund sessions. Approximately half of this instructional time was spent on story comprehension activities, a quarter on silent or oral reading of texts, with the remaining time involving the development of word level comprehension for the text materials read.

Grade 2. At the second grade level, the multifund reading support instruction more often supplanted the core curriculum reading instruction. In most cases, for both Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students, classroom literacy instruction did not include participation in a reading group lesson. While these children were generally involved in a variety of other language arts activities in their regular education classroom, they typically did not attend a reading group or work in a basal reader as did the other children.

Although several students [4,33,36] were invited to participate in classroom reading groups on observational days, these students had neither readers nor workbooks for this instructional session but, instead, were required to share materials with other group members. In an interview one classroom teacher noted explicitly that she agreed to accept one child in her classroom after the principal offered to relieve her of the responsibility for reading instruction for the child. We suspect, then, that in the cases of these students, participation in the classroom reading instructional group was not a typical experience.

Nonetheless, some of the observed grade 2 students did participate, and

the focus of this reading instruction was again story comprehension but with an increased emphasis on story accuracy, as reflected through more oral reading. What is noteworthy about these interactions is that these students were, in some cases, able to perform at a level commensurate with their non-identified peers on material that was more difficult than that used in their multifund instruction. Remaining Chapter I and special education students, however, participated in no classroom reading group lessons.

Language arts activities, as with the grade 4 subjects, were undifferentiated for the observed grade 2 students. The majority of the classroom literacy activities were word level accuracy tasks (32%) in a grade level spelling workbook, used for whole class spelling instruction and seatwork. These classroom teachers also read almost daily to their students from childrens' tradebooks and this accounted for another third of the classroom literacy time, and to a lesser extent, students also read to each other in pairs or small groups.

The multifund program was the primary source of reading instruction for most grade 2 Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students. Here the observed students were engaged in accuracy focused tasks for about

half of their instructional time. The accuracy focus was about evenly divided between word and letter pattern activities and oral reading of text. A little more than a third of the time was spent on comprehension tasks, either at the story level or on word meaning tasks to develop story comprehension. The remaining time was allocated to sentence composition activities, usually in response to the text that had been previously read.

Summary. Regardless of the reading achievement levels of the observed children, the classroom language arts activities they participated in (e.g. spelling, writing, listening) were undifferentiated for both Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students. That is, these children typically were presented with the same spelling activities, for instance, as children who exhibited at or above grade level achievement.

The support instruction was virtually identical for the Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students, both in the regular classroom and in the single support program and the general emphasis of the literacy instruction in both settings was similar. The distributions of activities reflected fairly well the general curricular emphases that the one district administrator discussed during her interview.

However, while a similar curricular emphasis was observed there are questions about the level of coordination between the instruction offered in the two settings. In the interviews we noted that one classroom teacher reported," *There's the Chapter I reading program- that I leave entirely to the people over there...I mean I don't pay any attention to what they're doing over there, I just go ahead on my own."* A multifund teacher noted that the goal for all her students was," *to read actively, to question what they're reading ...to connect their ideas as they're reading..and to relate the information they've discovered, both orally and in writing."* Another classroom teacher whose students are assigned the specialist teacher quoted above believes that," *The reading people are teaching phonics...you can see the children coming back, especially with phonics.. they're able to sound out words...".* In other interviews with both classroom and specialist teachers we noted little shared knowledge about the specifics of instruction in either setting. This was the case even though the director of support services argued, "*I'm talking about hands-on people coordinating their efforts on individual kids...I think we're doing a fine job as it relates to student needs...coordination, communication and continuing to monitor those needs and making changes as you need to do it."*

We noted that the multifund program often used curricular materials similar to those used in the classroom. However, we observed no consistent plan for the use of the various materials with individual children. Some children, for instance, used a more difficult level of curricular material in the multifund setting and easier levels in the classroom. In other cases the reverse was true. One student [33] worked in second grade materials in the classroom and preprimer materials in the multifund program. Another [27] worked in grade 3 materials in the classroom and grade 4 materials in the multifund setting. We were unable to identify the basis for decisions such as these. In some cases the classroom materials seemed more appropriate given student performance, while in other cases the multifund material seemed more appropriate, given adequate performance on the tasks. The lack of shared knowledge about the instruction and instructional responses across settings seems to suggest that the director's assertions about monitoring and communication were not supported by the evidence in general.

The interview and observational records include substantial evidence that this district has a well organized plan for responding to the literacy instructional needs of Chapter I and mainstreamed special education

students. There is no obvious difference in the responses to remedial or mildly handicapped students, both are instructed under the same unified plan. There is a general compatibility between the literacy instruction in the regular education classrooms and that offered in the multifund program- in both settings story level activities predominate and comprehension tasks occur frequently. However, close inspection of the literacy instruction across the school day for individual children suggests a fair amount of curricular fragmentation, with little relationship between the various instructional sessions in terms of specific stategies, skills or topics emphasized.

District 2

In this small urban district a single administrator is again responsible for both Chapter I and special education programs, although each program previously was the responsibility of a separate district-level administrator. Perhaps because of this history, the two programs remain quite distinct entities under this recently appointed administrator. The separation of the two programs extends beyond fiscal independence and distinct organizational plans. The specialist teachers do not share staff development training, students or curricular materials and rarely discuss common problems or difficulties. Special education services for the

mildly handicapped are centered in building resource rooms, where most children receive support instruction for one hour daily. Relatively few children are referred for special education services in the early grades, though about 15% of the first graders are either retained in grade or placed in a transition room between grades one and two. Chapter I services, on the other hand, are provided in the regular education classroom for periods of 20 to 30 minutes daily. The in-class instruction is delivered by Chapter I "teaching assistants", certified teachers without specialist credentials for reading instruction. These teachers are supervised by a Chapter I funded reading specialist in each building. The reading specialist also works with children, but not typically in the regular classroom and, also, has major responsibility for testing eligible children and setting up programs for the teaching assistants.

The district level administrator explained that Chapter I employed the teaching assistants because " *we could get more people for less money...*" but he also noted that it had become increasingly difficult to find certified teachers willing to work on this hourly base. When asked about the basis for the differences between the Chapter I in-class and the resource room pullout organizations, another administrator noted' " *in order to do that (extend in-class instruction to special education services)*

you'd have to completely individualize the structure since there are no more than one or two special education kids in any classroom ...(the special education teacher) would have to cart all her materials around from room to room, and it just wouldn't be workable." It seems that the larger number of Chapter I eligible children has shaped several facets of the instructional plan.

This district is predominately white with a blue collar working class population. There are several public housing projects for low income families, a large trailer court which provides low cost housing, and a fair amount of low rent property in deteriorating inner city neighborhoods. Roughly 70% of the households in the school attendance area have incomes below $15,000 and over half of the children are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Approximately 15% of the students are served through Chapter I (about 20% of the elementary school population) and 5% of the students are identified as handicapped.

Grade 4. The regular classroom reading instruction is from a mandated basal series and several supplementary skills materials. A mandated English series and a spelling curriculum drawn from the basal reader and a traditional spelling workbook are also used in the language arts

instruction. Both Chapter I and mainstreamed mildly handicapped students spent the majority of their classroom literacy instructional time in the same types of activities. A focus on accuracy in word, sentence and story level tasks characterized one-third of the regular class instruction, and transcription, or copying tasks, comprised another third with the remaining time spent in silent reading of stories or composition activities.

The incidence of accuracy tasks seemed related to the reading materials used in the fourth grade classrooms - a skills workbook focusing on "symbol-sound" relationships occupied much student time. This skills workbook was supplemented by "independent readers", a collection of short stories with follow-up questions, a component of the reading program generally responsible for the silent reading activities. The selection of language arts materials also influenced the activities and focus of instruction observed- the substantial investment of student time in transcription tasks. Rather than "process writing", which supports a much higher proportion of composition versus copying activities, the textbook used in these fourth grade classes for language arts instruction had a 1960 copyright date and represents a more traditional approach to learning to write. In this case, students were required to recopy text

material and supply appropriate punctuation, capitalization, grammar and paragraph form. In addition, an older and very traditional spelling approach and workbook was used and this also contributed to the time students spent copying, writing dictated words and rewriting misspelled words from five to ten times.

Virtually no time was spent listening to the teacher read from tradebooks. The only experiences children had with tradebook material was reading excerpts from the independent readers mentioned above. It appeared to the observers, however, that the range of difficulty of these materials was too difficult for the Chapter I and special education students who were required to read these with no instructional preparation or assistance. No instructional activities at either the word or story level comprehension were observed for any of these identified students.

At grade 4, students assigned to special education resource rooms for instructional support in reading, appeared to spend significantly more time (50%) in activities that focused on comprehension tasks, primarily at the story level and, less often, at sentence level, than did students assigned to the in-class Chapter I instructional support. As was noted

earlier, there was virtually no regular classroom instruction in reading that emphasized comprehension for either group of students. However, while comprehension tasks were more frequently the focus in the instructional support programs than in the regular classrooms, these students still spent less than 10% of their support instruction time engaged in silent reading activities. In the Chapter I instruction, accuracy on word and story level tasks was twice as frequent (44%) as in the special education instruction. Nonetheless, neither the regular education program, nor the instructional support programs seem to be working primarily towards a goal of creating self-improving independent learners from these children.

The differences in emphasis on text and story comprehension may again be attributable, at least in part, to the selection of instructional materials. A meaning-emphasis basal reader program was used in the special education resource rooms while the Chapter I instruction was predominately drawn from supplementary skills materials. Thus, the resource room participants were more likely to spend time reading longer selections from the basal material, while the Chapter I students read primarily short selections (1 to 3 paragraphs) from skills sheets. Similarly, the special education teachers were more likely to focus on

word comprehension activities which developed conceptual understanding of terms related to the assigned reading and assign story comprehension tasks following reading activities. The Chapter I instruction, on the other hand, was characterized by completion of sets of skill tasks, usually assigned with little instructional preparation, which were unrelated to one another or to the classroom curriculum.

In addition, the difficulty level of the materials used by students in both support programs was considerably easier (from preprimer to second grade) than the materials used in the regular classroom reading program. In one instance, for example, primer and readiness level material were used by a special education student [6] in the resource room, but this student was observed performing without difficulty in his grade 4 classroom materials. This particular student had obtained a near grade level reading achievement score (3.6) on an individually administered test at the beginning of the school year, yet he spent the majority of his resource room time on tasks requiring only prereading skills. His special education teacher reported that this student "*did not like challenging work*" because at home he had a "*weak father figure*". On the other hand, a Chapter I student [37] was clearly struggling during oral reading of a text that was extremely difficult for him. Yet his Chapter I teacher insisted he

perform this task, admonishing him, in fact, with the comment, " *You're not looking at your little words in your big words.*" This same student had to forego a classroom party in order to participate in this instructional support session, conducted in the hallway because of noise in the classroom.

In this district, Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students were routinely expected to make up any regular classroom work they missed due to participation in the support instruction. For one special education student [11], this meant a homework assignment that included five pages of the fourth grade science text, responding to two science "checkups" (requiring sentence composition and fill-in-the-blank tasks), and a spelling and an English worksheet. As this student returned from his resource room instruction he was given his corrected science test (58%) and he appeared visibly upset to the observer. The student was overheard talking to a classmate about the test, for which he said he had really studied, but he had studied the wrong chapter. This child was not present in the classroom during science instruction and had not been present when the material had been reviewed for the test. Nonetheless, he was held accountable for mastery of the material, since he was mainstreamed.

Grade 2. No special education students at the second grade level were observed in this district, in large part a function of the practice of delayed referral to special education. That is, the district had several strategies for attempting to resolve academic difficulties in the early grades that were implemented before consideration was given to special education services. As noted above, retention in grade, transition rooms and, also, the in-class remedial efforts were typically employed as measures to resolve school failure. The few special education students in the early grade levels were most often in fulltime special education placement. In any event, at grade 2 we observed only Chapter I students . Following the in-class model for instructional support services, support teachers worked with a small group of identified students in the regular classroom while the non-identified children continued with their regular education reading program.

A single code-emphasis basal reader, at the beginning second grade level, was used in grade 2 for classroom reading group instruction for the low achievement students. The majority of the student time was spent on undifferentiated seatwork primarily word accuracy tasks (40%), but much of this seatwork was unrelated to the basal reader lesson. Two students [60,62], for instance, spent 2 to 3 hours of this seatwork time on a series

of dittoes from different publishers which had no relationship to each other or to the basal lesson they received. In addition, students did worksheets from a spelling series and a language workbook, and consequently spent as much time transcribing, or copying, (11%) , as they did in story level comprehension activities (12%).

The in-class Chapter I instruction focused almost entirely on word accuracy tasks, with students spending only a quarter of the time on story level material. Isolated skill activities, such as sight word Bingo games and worksheets on letter patterns dominated the student time, with no particular congruence with the skills activities of the classroom curriculum. In one case [60], the Chapter I teacher used an entirely different word list from that of the classroom materials because, " *by the time the student has learned one set of words, the class was on a new unit.*" Because this support teacher always felt as though she was "*a week behind*" , she decided to teach a different sight word corpus, which required the Chapter I students to learn twice as many sight words as their non-identified peers. In another case, the Chapter I student [62] never had a lunch recess because he needed the time to complete the regular class seatwork, having spent a good portion of his seatwork time working with the Chapter I teacher on other curriculum tasks.

Summary. We observed some obvious differences in the Chapter I and resource room classes, but little differences in the classroom reading and language arts instruction the participating students experienced. A primary difference, of course, was the in-class versus the pullout location of the support services and the longer periods of support instruction for those in resource room settings. While, the Chapter I support was focused on reading activities and took place in the regular classroom setting, we found no evidence of coordination of the Chapter I instruction with that of the regular classroom. The Chapter I sessions addressed different words, skills and topics than were the focus of the classroom instruction, and while there was some emphasis on comprehension tasks, more time was spent on isolated and unrelated skill activities. Neither the classroom teachers nor the Chapter I staff shared much knowledge of the activities of the other, nor was there any organized effort to communicate. Rather, each group *"did their own thing"*, according to the interviews. There seemed little different with the special education services in terms of coordination with the classroom, but within the resource room activities there was a higher degree of consistency than was observed in Chapter I instruction. That is, sets of activities in Chapter I seemed largely

unrelated to each other, while resource room activities were more likely to be linked.

In District 2 then, we see distinct programs for Chapter I and special education services for the mildly handicapped, even though both are the responsibility of a single district administrator. The programs are organized differently, though both organizational plans seem driven by state fiscal policies in the sense that children served by either program typically receive near the minimum amount of support instruction required for reimbursement. Participants in both programs experience undifferentiated classroom instruction and assignments and both are held accountable for completing any assignments missed as a result of attending support instruction. The classroom reading and language arts instruction includes only very small amounts of story comprehension or composition activities for the children we observed and while both the Chapter I and resource room support instruction add some time on tasks of this nature, neither seems to receive adequate opportunity to engage in instructional activities that are likely to foster independence in learning from textual materials- an increasingly important ability as children move into higher grade levels.

District 3

In this small rural district different administrators are responsible for Chapter I and special education services. A building principal directs the former, while a district-level administrator directs the latter. The two support programs are distinct with little overlap in the populations served, though that has not always been the case. As the principal/Chapter I director noted in her interview, "*I think it is very difficult for the teachers in the system to accept that the kids who need it [instruction] the most are all over the place.*" She suggested that teachers were concerned that some students, especially those identified as handicapped, missed too much classroom instruction when they participated in multiple support programs, noting that while some of the special education students would benefit from remedial reading, participation in that program and the resource room would simply absent them from the classroom for too many periods. In essence then, concern about fragmentation of the school day has been evident in the instructional planning for children with academic difficulties in this district. Currently, both programs operate with the pullout model, though an in-class Chapter I program was attempted earlier in the observational year. The impetus for this attempt was a concern about classroom absence and the lack of coordination but, nevertheless, after roughly two weeks the pullout format

was reinstated. According to the principal/director neither the Chapter I nor the classroom teachers were happy with the in-class arrangement.

In the small school where we observed there was a fulltime Chapter I teacher and a halftime resource room teacher. Neither program had mandated curriculum materials and neither used a basal reader material as the primary source of instruction. Chapter I instruction, according to the principal/director was to be well coordinated with the classroom reading instruction. The regular education reading program was drawn from one of two district mandated basal reader series. Because of the small school size and different enrollments in different grade levels there are several combined-grade classrooms in the building (e.g. a combination second and third grade classroom) and some regrouping for regular classroom reading instruction. Over a third of the children attending the school are eligible for free or reduced price lunches and about 20% of the children receive Chapter I services. However, special education enrollments are small, less than 5%, and several children have been declassified and now attend remedial reading or participate in no support services at all. The principal expressed a dislike of labeling children and felt special education identification should be a strategy of last resort.

Grade 4. There seemed to be no differences in the classroom reading instruction of Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students. Both groups of students received undifferentiated language arts instruction and seatwork assignments, and both groups, with one exception [18], participated in basal reader instructional sessions with non-identified classmates.

All Chapter I and mainstreamed special education students were members of the bottom reading group, though other non-identified classmates were members also. This group instruction was drawn from a high third grade/ beginning fourth grade level basal reader (this is the publishers designation). Story comprehension activities and tasks dominated student instructional time in classroom reading, accounting for about a third of the observed activities. Listening to their teacher read aloud from tradebooks accounted for a substantial share, again nearly a third, of the language arts time for these students (though, of course, all students were involved).

By contrast, specialist instruction focused almost entirely [86%] on word and letter level accuracy tasks using sets of unrelated skill sheets and dittoes in both the remedial reading and resource room support

instruction. In the case of one mainstreamed special education student [15], his resource room instruction included a rapid and accurate reading a short selection (110 words) from a first grade level worksheet. This student had, however, just completed an accurate reading of a 1200 word selection from his high third/ fourth grade level basal in the classroom. In addition, he had responded accurately to various comprehension probes offered by the classroom teacher. On the other hand, the other special education student with whom he was paired for resource room instruction could not read the skill sheet, calling into question the reliability of the specialist teachers diagnosis of reading levels and highlighting what we observed to be rather frequent mismatch of curriculum materials used in the regular classroom and support services programs.

Grade 2. While the grade four regular education reading was focused on story comprehension, there was little evidence that comprehension, at any level, was the focus of grade two classroom instruction. Even though the classroom instruction involved a basal reader series, more emphasis was placed on other skills tasks drawn from materials produced by different commercial publishers. Here word accuracy activities, primarily seatwork tasks, comprised the greatest proportion of student instructional time, a bit more than one-third of the observed activities. Only small amounts of

time were devoted to story level tasks, about 10% to oral reading accuracy, and even less to silent reading of stories.

The reading and language arts seatwork activities these students were assigned were undifferentiated: the reading seatwork was assigned to all group members and the language arts seatwork tasks were common to all students in the classroom. In the case of two special education students [17,18], a classroom aide accompanied the students into the hallway to monitor and assist them in seatwork assignments that were too difficult for them to complete independently. These seatwork assignments involved completing isolated skill sheets, unrelated to each other or to the basal reader lesson. During these periods the students did manage to complete the tasks, but only with heavy cueing from the aide and without benefit of strategy explanations or any linking of the skills tasks to actual reading activities. The point is, that while the tasks were completed, we have little confidence that the students actually profited much from the activity, in the sense that it remained clear that they were still unable to do the tasks independently after the session.

The absence of a meaning centered literacy curriculum was observed not only in the proliferation of unrelated skill sheets and the several

supplemental skill workbook activities, but also in the low levels of listening comprehension (14%) and composition activities(1%). Instead, children spent a quarter of their time transcribing, or copying, words from the board or worksheets, they worked daily in a traditional grade level spelling workbook and completed penmanship (transcription) activities.

Neither the Chapter I nor the resource room instruction engaged students in any comprehension tasks. In Chapter I instruction, participants worked almost exclusively on accuracy tasks, spending 48% of their time on letter and word level tasks and 50% on oral reading accuracy. In the resource room, letter and word level accuracy tasks occupied almost all the instructional time (82%) with litle oral reading of text, no silent reading activities, and no instruction with a comprehension emphasis. We found no curriculum material that was used consistently in the support instruction offered second grade students but guided seatwork activities using isolated skill emphasis materials seemed to be the predominant activity structure. When basal reader materials were used with these students, the materials were not the same as those used in the classrooms, nor were they of similar difficulty levels. Finally, the letter and word level isolated skill activities focused on different letter-sound patterns and different words than the classroom curricular materials.

In the cases of two students [17,18], neither the instructional activities offered in the classroom nor those offered by the resource room teacher were at appropriate difficulty levels. The classroom reading and language arts seatwork, as noted earlier, was monitored by a classroom aide and was either too easy, requiring no reading response, or too difficult, with text the students could not read at all. In the resource room, one special education student [18] was scheduled for an individual reading session with the teacher, but refused to participate, securing himself a position under the reading table and remaining there until told to return to his classroom. The instruction, a word level accuracy task, was simply both too difficult and so confusing that this refusal seemed a sensible response.

Summary. In District 3, then, we observed two distinct instructional support programs, with different administrators, but two programs that were indistinguishable in terms of the nature of the support instruction. The Chapter I director/principal indicated that that remedial reading and regular reading were supposed to be "*closely coordinated*" and that the specialist teacher and the classroom teachers met formally on a quarterly basis to discuss their programs, though informal discussions took place

frequently. We observed no such pattern of coordination and in our interview with the reading teacher she noted, "*So what I do is different, is different than what's going in the classroom*". We found little evidence that anyone in this district had considered the relationship of special education curriculum to the regular education curriculum. The parttime nature of the resource room position seemed to influence the low levels of shared knowledge and instructional coordination, since the special education teacher had little unscheduled time in the building. However, while this facet seemed a potential negative influence, the fact that the Chapter I teacher held a fulltime position, and yet failed to provide any evidence of coordination, suggests that availability in the building before and after school simply does not ensure that opportunities for collaboration will be seized.

As in District 2, the support instruction in this district simply fragmented the curricular exposure experienced by the observed students. The regular classroom instruction was largely undifferentiated and students were generally held accountable for classroom tasks not completed because of participation in the instructional support services. The reading teacher noted she felt many of these children were placed in classroom materials that were too difficult and we observed this in some cases as noted above.

Perhaps this misplacement accounts for the substantial amount of non-engagement we observed in some students during scheduled reading or language arts periods. For instance, in the case of one Chapter I student [49], a nine minute reading group introduction of new vocabulary was followed by an assignment that the story be silently read at their seats and that two correlated workbook pages be completed. During the reading group it was noted that the student had correctly responded to only one of four items on a homework worksheet and that he made three reading errors in the single sentence he read aloud, all of this suggesting that he was experiencing much difficulty. After returning to his desk he attempted to complete one workbook page without reading the text and then went off-task until he left for remedial reading. While at the remedial session he orally read a much easier basal selection and completed several word accuracy tasks, tasks unrelated to the vocabulary lesson he had just completed, the word level workbook assignment he had attempted, or the words in the story that he had failed to read. By the time he returned from Chapter I others in his group had finished the classroom reading assignment and moved on to other assigned tasks. He never did attempt to complete the tasks, and although admonished to take any work not completed home, he left the work and took only his math worksheet home at the end of the day.

We provide this rather extended anecdote in an attempt to clarify how the observed children in this district spent their time. For some reason, the observed children in this district were engaged in classroom instruction only a little more than half as frequently as students in the other districts. In the case of the student [49] discussed above, the assigned work included several word level tasks; spelling focusing on the ew, ue, oo patterns; a word bank transcription task; a basal reader vocabulary list; a five word vocabulary listening activity; a phonics sheet on the ope and oat patterns; and two assigned reading selections, one at grade 2 level and the other at the primer level. He was generally engaged during the less difficult tasks and more frequently off-task during the more difficult assignments. Other students show somewhat similar patterns but what seems striking across the sample is the almost complete fragmentation of literacy tasks from each other. Even in classroom or specialists rooms the array of activities often simply did not hang together in any coherent fashion. The support instruction, rather than concentrating on activities that might facilitate performance in the core curriculum, presented additional unconnected instructional tasks and activities. Also absent, particularly in the grade 2 and support instruction, was any emphasis on comprehension tasks. Thus, while the two support programs appeared

similar in emphasis, neither seemed likely to resolve performance difficulties in the classroom.

District 4

In this district we again found separate administrators responsible for the Chapter I and special education programs. Here both positions were district-level assignments and we found two distinct programs for the children served. This district is a small urban school system, one with a high proportion (about 20%) of children classified as handicapped and large Chapter I program. Interestingly, however, one district administrator noted that children not eligible for Chapter I services (those that failed to fall below the achievement test cutoff point) were often referred for special education in order to obtain some form of instructional support services. The Chapter I students in this district, then, often had discrepancies between their grade placement and achievement as large, or larger, than students served through special education. This situation had created difficulties for a new school psychologist who resisted classifying children as learning disabled (previously the most frequent label) when no severe discrepancy existed. The issue had been resolved, it was reported, by classifying more of the referred children as speech and language impaired because, " *it is easier to find a vocabulary or syntax*

problem than a reading problem."

In this district there are different beliefs about the nature of instructional support services. As the Chapter I director stated, " *we have established cutoffs on the CAT scores...[but] when I saw the list of kids who were in the Chapter I program, I saw some of these kids who I knew had been in self-contained special ed classes, I questioned that, because I thought Chapter I was meant for a certain type of kid, and I felt these kids didn't qualify...*". As a result, children in this district typically receive services by categorical eligibility. Chapter I students receive remedial services from Chapter ! teachers, mildly handicapped students receive services from special education resource room teachers. At the building level identification of children by categorical program is pervasive and little, if any, overlap between populations served is evident.

The regular classroom reading instruction is drawn from a single basal reader series, although teachers supplement this with a variety of skills sheets from several publishers. The remedial program has no adopted curriculum, though the Chapter I director noted she, "*wants to get kids to read. If I have one goal it is to deemphasize how to put the engine together and let them show the children how to drive...*". Little support for this

view, however, was available from the interviews with remedial teachers or from the observations of instruction. In these cases a specific skill remediation model seemed most often evident. The special education program had a mandated basal, one different from that of the classroom and the special education teachers used that material as a primary source of instructional activities.

A building principal in this district offered his interpretation of the two programs, "*the kids in the remedial program are kids who receive those services to help them with either a mild or difficult problem, whether it be in reading or math. The kids in the special ed program have some pretty clearly defined disability or diagnostic problem that prevents them from functioning in the regular classroom... many of our kids, who are in resource room, are mainstreamed for their core subjects. What we have done is to take kids with like academic needs and put them in a more self-contained setting, for some subjects...*".

A special education resource room teacher in this district, when asked about the differences between Chapter I and resource room kids responded, "*I wasn't really sure about the difference. I mean I know there is a difference, I have kids in here that received Chapter I, Chapter I reading*

and then come to me for the other, so I mean it is very questionable as to who, how it is decided...". Another special education resource teacher responded to this question with, "*That's a good question. I, that is, I question these programs. Ah, what I'm understanding is that they are least a year behind, in scoring... there are other factors though entering into it, how they're doing socially, emotionally, in a class, behavior as far as how distractible they are, are they able to handle, cope with the responsibilities...*". Her discussion then moves on to discuss a particular student, one whose reading and math scores were above the entry range for Chapter I, but who receives primary services for reading in the resource room. She offers no rationale for this decision, noting there is nothing in the child's folder that indicates why this situation exists.

Thus, several notions about the two programs seem evident but we found little evidence that suggested the populations differed on achievement, at least in reading achievement. Nonetheless, the two programs operated with different administrators, different curricula and different specialist teachers and little evidence of coordination between them. A basic difference in this district's response to the children in these two support programs, at least in terms of literacy instruction, was found in the response of the regular education effort. That is, generally the Chapter I

students participated in classroom reading instructional groups, while the mainstreamed special education students did not.

Grade 4. Chapter I students participated in the regular classroom basal reader instruction and special education students were absent from the classroom during this period. At this level, the mainstreamed special education students participated in few reading or language arts activities in the regular classroom (an average of about 20 minutes a day) while a Chapter I participant [53] logged nearly three hours in such activities. This student spent his instructional time engaged in a variety of activities including word accuracy (36%), oral reading (28%), and story comprehension (18%), using the same code-emphasis basal program as the grade 2 students. During Chapter I instruction, the student's time was about equally split between word accuracy, oral reading and story comprehension, the same types of tasks completed in the classroom but with different materials and at a lower difficulty level.

During resource room reading instruction, students spent one-third of their time engaged in word accuracy tasks and another 10% in oral reading activities. Although a meaning-emphasis basal was used, as per district

policy, the majority of the observed activities focused on word analysis tasks, primarily, seatwork assignments. In fact, not only was the basal workbook used, but also an independent practice book, a language skills text, and these supplemental materials seemed to constitute the bulk of the instructional materials used with the observed students. Story level activities, including those from the basal program, were less frequently the focus of instruction. This dependence on seatwork activities was particularly evident with one student [32], whose daily schedule indicated reading seatwork tasks from 11 different commercial publishers , in addition to the basal reader program, with little observed coherence on topic, skill, strategy or difficulty level among the various assignments.

Grade 2. Similar to grade 4, the grade 2 Chapter I students participated in the same classroom instructional activities as their non-identified peers for both reading and language arts while the mainstreamed special education students usually did not, since they were scheduled for resource room during that period. For special education students, then, the resource room provided primary services for reading , but they did participate in undifferentiated language arts activities in the regular classroom.

For both the special education and Chapter I students in grade 2, word

accuracy tasks made up the most significant proportion of the regular education instructional time (50% and 40%, respectively). About one-third of the Chapter I students' instructional time was spent on story level tasks, both oral reading and composition. In contrast, the mainstreamed special education students rarely worked on story level activities in their regular education classes. Instead, they spent most of their regular education instructional time working on worksheets and dittoes that presented word and sentence level tasks. These were language arts and spelling worksheets primarily, since they were out of the room during the scheduled reading group time. Both Chapter I and special education students spent about 20% of their regular education literacy instructional time in either composing activities or listening to the teacher read from tradebooks.

The regular education reading instruction was, for the most part, delivered in a whole-class format using a code-emphasis basal reader. The whole-class instruction derived from an implementation of the Joplin plan, in which students are regrouped homogeneously for reading instructional sessions. The Chapter I students, then, participated in this regular education instruction, while the special education students typically did not. Perhaps the code-emphasis basal materials contributes

significantly to the high incidence of word accuracy instructional activities in the second grade classrooms (50%) and the paucity of story comprehension (4%) and silent reading activities (0%).

The reading instruction experienced by the grade 2 mainstreamed students occurred in the resource room primarily, as noted earlier. The majority of these students used a low level grade 2 meaning-emphasis basal reader in the resource room and as a result, they spent at least as much time on story level comprehension tasks (20%) as in word accuracy activities. In addition, almost one-third of their instructional time was spent listening to tradebooks read by the special education teacher, and another 20% engaged in composing stories.

In the Chapter I classes, the students spent about half their instructional time engaged in word level accuracy tasks and a similar amount in tasks which required comprehension of short text selections from a single second grade level remedial skills text.

Summary. We found little evidence of coordination between the regular education literacy instruction and the instruction in either support program, and no evidence that literacy instruction in one setting supported

the instruction in the other. On the contrary, the mainstreamed special education students [19],for example, might be tested on two different 20 word spelling lists, on the same day, in the regular classroom and in the resource room. Little diagnostic information appeared to have been communicated from specialists to classroom teachers, and vice-versa, since few of the children were observed working on materials at similar levels of difficulty, or comparable tasks, across settings.

For example, a grade 2 child [16] was asked to write a composition in the resource room, a task that was obviously difficult for him, yet little instructional support was provided. In another instance [9], the writing activity in the resource room was considerably less challenging than the composing task the same child had successfully completed in the regular classroom. Reading instruction across settings was similarly inconsistent. The Chapter I teacher, for example, used the same second grade remedial skills text with all second graders, yet in their classrooms these students were reading in materials that ranged from first to high second grade level. The remedial instruction, then, was as undifferentiated, in terms of tasks and difficulty level, as was that in the regular classroom. Similarly, special education instruction was largely undifferentiated with students placed, for the most part, in a low second

grade basal in the resource room. However, at least one student [19] who used this material was successfully reading the high second grade material used in the classroom, even though he was absent for the instructional component associated with the more difficult text.

Another student [21], was observed taking a spelling test, for the second time, on which she could read only 3 of the 20 words. The aide in the resource room who administered the test told her she "*was not listening to the words*", and assigned the student the task of copying each incorrectly spelled word 10 times. Thus, for the next 30 minutes the student dutifully transcribed these words, this for the second time. However, no instruction on word identification was provided. Back in the regular classroom, this same student spent 45 minutes mainly looking at a homonyms ditto. She spent the time looking because she could not read the majority of the words and thus, she attempted only 7 of the 17 items, and was successful with only three.

The instructional support programs in this district were organized differently, though we found little evidence of any substantial differences in the students served, and the experiences of the two groups of students differed in a variety of ways. A basic difference was in the response of

the regular education effort, with Chapter I children participating in classroom reading instructional groups while the mainstreamed special education students did not. This district organizational plan then, produced different classroom experiences in reading instruction, though special education students, especially at the lower grade levels, did participate in the regular classroom language arts program. We found little evidence that either instructional support program was coordinated with the regular education efforts and, instead, found substantial fragmentation of curricular experiences for participating students. The adoption of an alternative basal reader program in the special education program seemed to influence the nature of the instructional activities the resource room students experienced, primarily by adding more comprehension tasks. However, as illustrated by student 32, in particular, this district action did not ensure any substantial coherence in the instruction received.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this concluding section we begin by attempting to characterize the nature of the literacy instruction we observed. In this characterization we draw upon the available research which describes the nature of instruction found to be effective in developing literacy generally (e.g.

Berliner, 1981; Good, 1983; Leinhardt, Zigmond and Cooley, 1981) and that which focuses on developing literacy in low achievement and mildly handicapped populations, such as we observed (Allington,1983; Crawford, Kimball and Patrick, 1984; Greenwood, Delquadri, Stanley, Sasso, Wharton and Schulte,1981; Haynes and Jenkins, 1986; Larrivee, 1985; Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Graden and Algozzine, 1984; Zigmond, Vallecorsa and Leinhardt, 1980). We conclude with a discussion of the various factors which seem to influence the design of the instructional support programs we observed. In this discussion, then, we attempt to explain why we saw what we saw.

The nature of literacy instruction. One difficulty in attempting to characterize the nature of the literacy instruction observed is, simply, that the diversity of instructional experiences was enormous. However, we would begin by noting that, generally, the instructional experiences we observed did not fulfill the expectation that remedial and mildly handicapped students had access to larger amounts of significantly superior instruction. However, unlike Haynes and Jenkins (1986) and Ysseldyke,et al (1984), we had no direct observational data on regular education students, and, thus, we draw this conclusion from information that is less adequate than theirs. Nonetheless, the organizational plans that districts presented most often absented the observed children from

either all or part of the classroom literacy instruction. In addition, for these remedial and special education students, the total time allocated for literacy instruction seemed comparable, in the best cases, to that reported in previous studies of regular education instruction (e.g. Berliner, 1981). One striking feature of these observations was the enormous variability in literacy instructional time experienced by the observed students, variability which seems substantially larger than that found for regular education students. Some students received very little instruction, while others participated in literacy instruction for fairly large segments of the school day. In most cases, however, participation in instructional support programs did not seem to increase the quantity of literacy instruction received.

We noted earlier, however, that simply increasing the quantity of instruction, particularly if little attention is paid to instructional quality, may not be an adequate response to reading failure. While quantity of instruction is an important correlate of achievement, large amounts of instruction 1) in materials that elicit high rates of error, 2) on tasks with little relationship to reading development, or 3) that presents fragmented and incoherent curricular tasks, are unlikely to enhance literacy development. Thus, we examined the quality of the literacy instruction

from a task perspective and attempted to describe the instructional activities by noting features such as those mentioned above.

Not all observed students, served by either support program, participated in classroom reading instructional groups. Those students who did, however, were typically grouped with other low achievers for basal reader instruction. These low achievement instructional groups frequently focused on accuracy, and concentrated instruction at the word level. When larger units of text were the focus - stories, for instance - accuracy remained the critical feature of instruction, with oral reading tasks that evidenced little, if any, emphasis on comprehension, a frequent activity. Such instructional activities and emphases are common features of instruction for low achievement students in classrooms (Allington,1983). The students also routinely participated in undifferentiated language arts activities in the classroom. They were assigned grade level spelling, transcribing, composing and grammar tasks along with their normally achieving classmates. A few students were successful participants in both the classroom reading and language arts activities, but most were not. Success was more common in reading groups, but even that was far from universal. Finally, we observed little coherence in the various literacy instructional activities that these students experienced in the

regular classroom. Rarely, for instance, were decoding or vocabulary activities during reading instruction related to word structure or word meaning activities during spelling; rarely were reading and composing tasks related on topic, genre or text structures; rarely were grammar or transcription tasks related to reading, writing or composing activities; rarely did we find sets of seatwork tasks that presented an extended focus on related topics or strategies. Instead, we observed an array of tasks, across the school day, that offered little evidence of coherence or attention to unified curriculum plan.

Each of the observed students participated in literacy instruction offered in an instructional support program, in most cases they left their regular classroom for this instruction. There were several distressing features of this instruction. First, we were surprised to find much of this instruction also undifferentiated. That is, these students participated in another instructional group, with common instructional activities, as a matter of course. Some students represented a better 'fit' with the instructional focus of the group activity than others. In some cases the instructional participants were more homogeneous, in terms of achievement levels, than in other cases. Rarely, however, in either remedial or resource room classes, did we observe instruction that seemed particularly tailored to

the unique needs of individual students. What we commonly observed was children attempting to fit an instructional material, or instructional routine, that was assigned the group attending the support instruction at that time period. We found similar materials, tasks and instructional routines in both support programs and were unable to identify relevant features of the instructional sessions that would differentiate between the two support programs. These findings reflect a situation similar to that described by Allington, Stuetzel, Shake and Lamarche (1986), Haynes and Jenkins (1986), Morsink, Soar, Soar and Thomas (1986), and Thurlow, et al (1984). In each of these studies the authors report little evidence that instruction in resource rooms or remedial programs is differentiated by individual instructional needs.

A second distressing aspect of the instruction in both support programs was the incredible fragmentation of curricular experiences. These students had to deal with not only the the array of unrelated literacy activities of the classroom, but they were also assigned additional sets of unrelated activities and tasks in the support setting. Thus, the curricular fragmentation for these children occurred at several levels. First, they experienced the fragmentation in the classroom literacy tasks. While attending support instruction they also were assigned an incoherent array

of unrelated tasks. In addition, there was little coordination between the instruction offered in the two settings, with different curricular materials developed from competing theories of reading development, different difficulty levels of curriculum materials, and often different task emphases. Similar findings have been noted by others who studied resource or remedial instruction (Allington,et al,1986; Haynes and Jenkins, 1986; Holley, 1986; Johnston, et al, 1984; Kimbrough and Hill,1981; Rowan, Guthrie, Lee and Guthrie, 1986). The extraordinary fragmentation of instructional experiences of these children simply undermined the good efforts we often saw- good efforts from both learners and teachers.

We must conclude, from the evidence available, that the expectation that participation in remedial or special education will enhance access to larger amounts of higher quality instruction remains yet unfulfilled. While many good teachers attempted many good deeds, in the end many of these students experienced instruction which appeared unlikely to resolve their literacy failure.

Influences on the design of instructional support programs. In our analyses we attempted to identify factors that influenced the instruction

we observed in the support programs. There exists several broad levels of influence, each having a potential role in shaping the nature of the instruction. Below we present our understanding of how forces at each level constrained decisions made at other levels.

Federal level. Both Chapter I and special education instructional support programs derive from federal initiatives. In both cases, the options for the design of programs are influenced by rules and regulations issued at the federal level. For instance, Chapter I has, by and large, precluded early intervention efforts with a focus on supporting programs enrolling students in grades 2 through 12. Thus, children are literally required to experience failure for at least a year before service can begin. In some cases, children who might have benefitted from early remedial intervention were simply referred to special education, the only option for externally funded support instruction. The identification of clients is constrained through an emphasis on first serving those children "most in need", and by the fact that the funds available are simply inadequate to serve all children who are eligible (Carter,1984). Combined, these influences produced Chapter I programs that had varying entry criteria, with different standardized test score cutoffs in the three districts that relied on these measures for identification. In districts where the

eligible Chapter I population was large, children had to obtain lower achievement test scores to qualify for services. In most districts there were children who were having substantial difficulty in the classroom who were not served, usually because enrollments were restricted to those who met the arbitrary standard.

Finally, the "supplement not supplant" provision of Chapter I influenced the instruction. We observed what seemed to be two distinct effects. First, Chapter I children were more likely to participate in a classroom reading group than were the special education students. In some cases this resulted in these children receiving larger amounts of reading instruction. Second, the lack of curricular consistency between classroom and Chapter I instruction also seemed derived from a misunderstanding of this provision. In our interviews we were told that Chapter I instruction had to be different by some informants. While this is not the case, it is a common misperception that has been noted for most of the 20 year history of the program (Allington and Johnston,1986).

Federal influences on special education are reflected in the composition of the Committee on Special Education (CSE), the group of professionals that evaluate referrals and recommend placement in one program option or the

other. Regular educators, especially classroom teachers are largely unrepresented on the CSE, since federal regulations do not require their membership. Thus, the mainstream classroom teacher typically had little voice in decisions about level of service, appropriate curriculum or any of the other issues central to resolving academic failure. In turn, this seemed, often, to result in a lack of "ownership" in the problem or solution. The mandated individualized educational plan (IEP), with its reductionist emphasis on specific objectives for handicapped students, trivialized the learning process and produced a bias toward low level skills instruction as the emphasis of the intervention.

However, perhaps the greatest influence at the federal level was the labelling, or categorical identification, of special students. In our interviews with teachers and administrators we found a somewhat contradictory dual focus. On the one hand, educators often expressed skepticism about the reality of differences between students in various categories, though those closest to the children were most skeptical. On the other hand, educators often alluded to the ' special methods ' that were necessary to teach these children.

State level. The majority of Chapter I participants attended remedial

reading instruction for between 90 and 100 minutes per week, with no obvious differentiation by instructional need. Thus, whether the student was in grade two and reading at the first grade level, or in grade four reading at that same level, three 30 minute remedial group sessions was the standard. We trace this standard to the state interpretation of the Chapter I "sufficient size, scope and quality" provision. Since 90 minutes per week is the minimum service allowed, 90 minutes is what Chapter I participants receive. If the state were, for instance, to shift the minimum to 120 minutes, for instance, Chapter I students would undoubtedly receive that quantity of instruction. Similarly, state requirements for reimbursement for special education services establish a participation minimum which is double that of Chapter I, and again, many participants receive the minimum or slightly more. These fiscal incentives lead districts to design programs in particular ways (McGill-Franzen,1987).

Compared to special education regulations, state Chapter I guidelines suggest a substantially higher cap on the number of students a single specialist teacher should serve. Thus, Chapter I teachers often served two or three times as many pupils in larger groups for shorter and less frequent periods. However, special education teachers seemed, more often, find themselves instructing a more heterogeneous group of children.

It seemed to be the case, in most districts, that this occurred primarily as a result of the difference in the sizes of the participating populations. The remedial class would often be drawn from a single grade level, indeed, in some cases from a single classroom. The special education teacher often drew her class from several grade levels and typically from multiple classrooms. Thus, the Chapter I groups tended to be more homogeneous, since both curriculum placement and age levels were similar, while the special education classes ranged more widely.

A final influence, we suspect, is a state policy that removes children identified as handicapped from the statewide achievement testing program. While the special education students can take part in the testing, there is no requirement that their scores be submitted to the state office. There exists no similar reporting exclusion for Chapter I participants. Thus, a second incentive to identify children as handicapped seems to operate, since by moving low-achievement children from compensatory to special education programs their achievement scores are no longer reflected in the district's assessment profile.

Gartner and Lipsky (1987) point out that this state has organized fiscal incentives that encourage placing students in more restrictive educational

environments, a set of policies at variance with the intent of PL 94- 142. Similarly, in an era of concern about "overclassification" of students as handicapped, state policies offer several incentives for just that. Not only can larger amounts of reimbursement be attracted through shifts of students from compensatory to special education, but at the same time low-achievement students can be removed from the statewide assessment reports.

District level. Two previous studies have described district level influences similar to what we observed generally, but these authors arrived at different conclusions about the most appropriate stategies for resolution of the problem (Kimbrough and Hill,1981; Moore, Hyde, Blair, and Weitzman, 1981). In both studies the fragmented and often incoherent nature of the instructional support services were noted. Both noted the lack of any district level plan to achieve coordination, and both argued that instructional support programs seemed to have little impact on modifying problems in the regular education program. Moore, et al (1981) suggest that most district administrators were ill-prepared for the task of developing coordinated approaches since few had the necessary experiences or professional preparation needed to create curriculum plans or instructional interventions. They also attribute the lack of

coordination to the fact that many of the district level support program administrators did not consider their programs to be literacy programs, even though literacy failure was the common condition for participating in virtually all such programs.

However, Kimbrough and Hill (1981) emphasize that, " district officials have far greater resources for program coordination and integration than do principals and teachers.(p.42)", while Moore et al (1981) suggest that leadership in coordination must come from principals. We observed two districts that had more detailed plans for instructional support services and two that had rather meager plans. The effects of district plans on the operation of the various programs was quite evident in all districts. In the two districts with more detailed plans we observed more consistency within the support program instruction, though not necessarily between the support programs and the classroom. In districts without a defined program we observed substantial variation within the support programs.

Some aspects of the district plans seemed to have a greater effect on instruction than others. For instance, district decisions about curricular materials had an impact in District 4, where special education students had a basal reader program different from that in the classroom. In this

case, the basal reader dominated much of the instruction which often lead to more story activities, more comprehension tasks, and greater consistency between tasks. At the same time, however, resource room teachers invariably offered less instruction than suggested in the manual and often placed groups of students in a single basal level- whether that was the most appropriate level or not. In addition, these students typically did not participate in classroom reading groups as per the plan. While this did reduce the curriculum fragmentation, it also failed to increase the quantity of reading instruction experienced. In District 3, there was no mandated curriculum for either remedial or special education, and we observed little coherence within the support instruction tasks, few story activities and little emphasis on comprehension tasks. The de facto curriculum here became isolated skill sheets. District 1 had not purchased and mandated a commercial curriclum but had invested in teacher training toward a particular philosophy of literacy instruction and again we observed greater coherence in the instructional effort. District 4, on the other hand, employed non-specialist teachers to deliver remedial instruction and had also no clear curriculum plan. In this district, we observed incredible fragmentation and an abundance of low quality instructional episodes.

Like Kimbrough and Hill (1981) then, we would point to the need for some fairly well-defined district level plan that would detail who should be collaborating with whom, on what, and why. We see the need for some district curriculum plan, though this obviously would not necessitate mandating a particular commercial material. In addition, such a plan should include basic issues such as whether support instruction is to be supplementary and related to mastery of the classroom core curriculum, or whether this instruction is to supplant that in the regular education program. We view the school principal as important in ensuring that the district plan is appropriately implemented and followed in the school, but argue that district plans are necessary.

In the main, however, we observed many aspects of district plans that seemed designed primarily to simplify the responsibilities of the district administrator. Arbitrary and fixed cutoff points on standardized achievement test, inflexible schedules, rigid and unsatisfactory assessment and evaluation procedures, and other such decisions, made it easy to "go by the book" and ignore the needs of individual children. Decisions to create maximum enrollments for the minimum amount of service necessary to obtain reimbursement resulted in situations that made it virtually impossible for specialist teachers to meet the original

intent of the support instruction. When districts develop poorly conceived plans, or no true curriculum plan, then teachers and principals find their attempts to meet childrens' needs more difficult.

Each of the district level decisions had an effect on the teachers, both specialist and classroom teachers. Specialist teachers were often overwhelmed by the sheer diversity and numbers of students whose needs they were to attempt to meet. Children more often received what was available than what they needed. When districts had no clearly defined literacy curriculum both classroom and support teachers invented their own. Some invented better curriculum plans than others, but whenever teachers had to invent curriculum, fragmentation occurred. In the case of District 1, which had a reasonably detailed curriculum plan and a unified plan for literacy instruction, we observed more coherence than elsewhere. Even here though, district administrators simply elected not to monitor implementation of the plan and instruction across settings often lacked the coordination desired.

Teacher. Of all the truisms associated with education, *the teacher makes the difference,* is probably the most frequently cited. We would concur,

and thus we must attempt to describe the influence that the teacher exerts on the instructional experiences of children. It is easy to simply attribute most of what we observed, pleasant and unpleasant, to teacher influences. However, as outlined above, teachers are, to some extent pawns in the influence game. Nonetheless, as Dreeben (1987) notes, " The decisions that district and school administrators make in selecting and distributing educational resources set limits on educational possibilities, but they do not directly determine how teachers organize and instruct their classes"(p.32). Although district decisions about enrollments, schedules and curriculum all constrain teacher decisions, there yet exists substantial arenas where teachers influence the instructional experiences of children.

Unfortunately, the instruction we observed suggests that many classroom and specialist teachers simply lack the expertise necessary to deliver high quality literacy instruction to low- achieving children. While acknowledging the substantial obstacles that confronted teachers, we must conclude that many of the teachers were poorly trained or that their training was outdated. One can argue that school districts must share the burden of poorly trained teachers, along with the teacher training institutions and the teachers themselves.

Contrary to the concept of individualized instruction, McGill-Franzen (1988) argues that specialist teachers, as well as classroom teachers, develop instructional routines, routines employing known material and teaching activities and simply present these routines repeatedly with group after group. Children, then, must conform to the routine if they are to be successful. Whether in the classroom, or down the hall, children must fit the teacher's routine. The undifferentiated instruction we so often observed in both instructional settings suggest the appropriateness of that conceptualization. As noted in earlier studies (Allington, et al, 1986), specialist teachers typically employed a quite limited set of teaching routines and, similarly a limited set of curricular materials that virtually all students were presented.

Where do we go from here?

We initiated this study for several reasons. First, we were interested in addressing directly the issue of how schools responded to children who were failing to learn to read on schedule. Because of our dual backgrounds in remedial and special education of the mildly handicapped, we were interested in the nature of the response, in terms of literacy instruction particularly, to these two groups of students. We were interested

because, like so many others (Bartoli and Botel,1988; Birman,1981; Leinhardt, Bickel and Pallay,1982; Reynolds, Wang and Walberg,1987; Reschly,1987; Ysseldyke and Algozzine, 1982), we have begun to doubt the validity of the distinctions that are attempted to differentiate low achievement learners. What we attempted to describe were the instructional experiences of the two groups of students- students receiving services from two distinct federal initiatives. In the end we found few differences worth attending to in the instructional experiences of the students observed- few differences attributable primarily to the categorical program that they participated in.

Two models for change. The findings of this study of remedial and special education students instructional experiences are remakably consistent with those of earlier studies. None of the reports are heartening to those concerned with the educational futures of low-achievement children. There are, obviously, serious limitations in current conceptualizations of how best to deal with school failure. From one perspective, the uniform standards for achievement and the uniform methods of instruction that exemplify schools create a group of students considered deviant (Gelzheiser, 1987). The deviance, of course is a result of learner differences and uniform expectations, and may be exacerbated

by instructional environments that give those most in need in need of high quality instruction, instruction that is qualitatively, and perhaps, quantitatively, no better, or worse, than successful children experience.

In our view, current programs and policies must change, if the likelihood for enhancing educational opportunities is to improve. We are quite unsure what type of change would best serve the interest of the low-achievement learners. Nonetheless, we offer two suggestions, both would require considerable shifts in current practices, and both have inherent dangers.

Our first suggestion would require the merger of all instructional efforts aimed at low-achievement children, regardless of current categorical label. Others have proposed similar shifts (e.g. Gartner and Lipsky, 1987; Jenkins, Pious and Peterson, 1987; Leinhardt, et al, 1982; Moore, et al,1981; Reschly, 1987; Reynolds, et al, 1987; Stainback and Stainback, 1984; Will, 1986), though the details of the various proposals differ. In our proposed unified effort, districts would create instructional intervention plans that focused on providing both additional instruction and higher quality instruction to low achievement students. Meeting the instructional needs of individuals, in our view, is more a matter of providing some students with larger amounts of high quality instruction,

moreso than providing for different individual learning styles. In our unified plan districts would select, or create, a literacy curriculum, for instance, that all students would master. This curriculum plan would encompass all literacy instructional efforts, at all levels. Children who needed larger amounts of instruction to attain mastery on schedule would receive just that - enhanced opportunities to learn. Such additional instruction would be provided by content specialists, specialist teachers who had much better training in the difficulties that students have in learning particular content. Rather than the current system of training by categorical classification, we would have math, science, reading and writing specialists that would work both with teachers and children. These content specialists would be trained to deal with all learners, but with a focus on the particular difficulties that some learners have with specific school subjects. These specialists would conduct all of the assessment, focusing on identifying the particular difficulties the individual learners have. They would be far more knowledgeable about the core curriculum materials in use and the classroom instruction experienced, than are the specialists the work in our schools today. The instructional support offered would invariably be in addition to that provided in the classroom, though enhancing classroom instruction would be central to their role.

Our second proposal involves the elimination of all categorical programs as we now know them and, likewise, the elimination of all specialist teachers. Actually, specialist teachers would still be in the schools only they would become classroom teachers. In this accountability model, we would reduce class sizes by about half through the elimination of most administrators and specialists that now , according the U. S. Department of Education, outnumber classroom teachers in this country. Schools would still have the benefits of the expertise of specialists teachers, only now they would work as classroom teachers and collaboratively assist other teachers in the preparation of lessons for learners with special instructional needs.

In this effort, each teacher would be accountable for the learning of all students, resolving the problem of "ownership" others have noted. We would still have district plans, particularly coherent and complete curricula that teachers would develop and implement. With 12 to 15 students in a classroom, we would expect that teachers would be far better able to meet individual needs than in classrooms of 24 to 30 students. The funding that now supports the various remedial, - compensatory, and special education efforts would be redirected to

enhancing the classroom instruction.

We do not expect that either of these proposals will be soon implemented, however. Tradition, vested interests, and the lack of any powerful and organized constituency for the education of low-achievement children will impede anything but attempts to modestly modify the current situation. None of this should deter those whose view of the current situation is similar to ours. Children come to school expecting to be successful, currently some are and some are not. In neither instance is it the case that child holds the power to determine his, or her, fate - that power lies with those adults we call educators. Until we create instructional settings and programs that allow each child to be successful, we fail our most important constituency, the children we teach.

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